

as a means of reducing waste, fraud, and abuse in programs administered by the Secretary of Education. Congress has already authorized the Secretary of Education to match data with the IRS in the Higher Education Act of 1998, but, to date, the Internal Revenue Code has not been amended to allow this matching to take place. My staff has worked closely with the Treasury Department, the Office of Management and Budget, the Joint Committee on Taxation, and the Department of Education in developing this proposal.

This proposal is the right policy and, with all of our consultations, we believe that it is the correct technical solution. I am introducing it as we hopefully close out the first session of the 108th Congress in order that it can be reviewed over the next few months by all participants in the student loan community. I ask any stakeholders—students, parents, schools, lenders and loan processors—to review this legislation to be sure that there are no unintended consequences of the bill. I welcome constructive criticism of this bill and look forward to seeing it enacted next year.

H.R. 6—ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. CHARLES W. STENHOLM

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise in support of H.R. 6, the energy bill that America has waited so long for. Like the original House version of this legislation, I intend to support the conference report on the floor today, but not without some reservation.

Since being elected to Congress in 1978, I've carefully watched our federal spending and have advocated for a balanced budget. Under our current policies, America is facing a \$400 billion budget shortfall, and we will continue to run deficits for the foreseeable future. This energy bill conference report continues on that path of fiscal irresponsibility. The Joint Committee on Taxation stated this bill will cost up to \$23.5 billion dollars. I am very disappointed this conference report didn't include the offsets that the Senate version did.

However, I truly believe this legislation provides the proper framework to diversify America's fuel sources. As Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, I'm glad there are greater incentives for increased production of ethanol. I'm glad to see production tax credits for wind, solar and biomass energy, as well as nuclear electricity generation. Diversification of our nation's energy sources will help us meet our goal of reducing our dependence on foreign sources of fuel.

More importantly, this energy bill provides the right tools for independent oil and gas producers to continue producing from our own fields, right here in this country. I've been fighting for these measures for years, and I'm glad Congress is finally going to implement them. The time is long overdue for Congress to recognize the importance for America to decrease our use of oil and gas from foreign countries and to capitalize on the resources beneath our own soil. And, contrary to what many groups will lead us to conclude, we can drill for oil and gas without doing damage to

our environment. Former U.S. Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas once said that when America imported more than half of its crude and petroleum products, it would have reached a point of peril. Friends and colleagues, we have reached that point.

Although I intend to support this legislation, I must express my extreme disappointment of the process in which this bill was considered. I have worked for years in Congress to promote equality and bipartisanship in this great institution. However, this bill was written behind closed doors with no input from the public. Unfortunately, my Democratic colleagues were not given the opportunity to offer significant amendments to the legislation. This conference report isn't perfect, and it could have been improved significantly if my colleagues were allowed to bring their ideas to the negotiating table and if we were allowed to offset the cost of this legislation.

FREEDOM FOR MANUEL VÁZQUEZ PORTAL

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about Manuel Vázquez Portal, a prisoner of conscience in totalitarian Cuba.

Mr. Vázquez is a 52-year-old writer, poet and founder of the independent news agency Grupo de Trabajo Decoro. Originally, Mr. Vázquez was a high school teacher and a journalist for several state-owned media outlets. However, after years of observing the constant lies and incessant distortion mandated by Castro's totalitarian regime, Mr. Vázquez began working for an independent news agency in 1995. As an independent journalist, Mr. Vázquez relentlessly chronicled the atrocities committed by Castro's machinery of repression, even going so far as to have his articles published under the pseudonym Pablo Cedeño. Eventually, Mr. Vázquez founded the independent news agency Grupo de Trabajo Decoro in 1999.

In fact, because of his ability to find and write the truth as a journalist working under Castro's stifling repression, Mr. Vázquez will receive the 2003 International Press Freedom Award from the Committee to Protect Journalists on this coming Tuesday, November 25, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Vázquez's fellow recipients of the International Press Freedom Award accept this high honor, Mr. Vázquez will be languishing in the Cuban totalitarian gulag next to a toilet he describes as a "hole regurgitating its stench 24 hours a day." Mr. Vázquez was arrested in the reprehensible March crackdown on those many patriots who actively opposed Castro's tyranny. Subsequently, in a sham trial held in April, Mr. Vázquez was sentenced to 18 years in the Cuban gulag.

I remind my colleagues that, under Castro's totalitarian regime, any freedom of the press, any effort to display the atrocities of the regime under the spotlight of truth, is met with swift and violent repression. Mr. Vázquez described the punishing conditions of the Cuban gulag in a diary smuggled out of prison by his

wife. He said "the cell is a space of 1.5 meters wide and 3 meters long." Inside his cell, he describes an interior comprised of insects, an unstable cot, a filthy mattress and a disgusting toilet.

Mr. Speaker, a man who is about to receive the International Press Freedom Award is suffering at this very moment in those abominable conditions. Mr. Vázquez had the courage to depict the reality of Cuba under Castro's totalitarian dictatorship, and now he is locked in the gulag for the next 18 years.

My Colleagues, we can not stand by in silence while those who pursue truth languish in the gulags of repressive dictators. We must stand together and loudly demand freedom for Manuel Vázquez Portal.

PHARMACY EDUCATION AID ACT OF 2003

HON. BARBARA CUBIN

OF WYOMING

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are a vital link in this nation's health care system. Across the nation, we are seeing a shortage of pharmacists and this shortage is taking hold in Wyoming as well.

Americans of all ages will continue to take advantage of the therapeutic benefits that come from prescription medications.

Without pharmacists to distribute those drugs and educate us about their effects, we would see the downfall of our health care system. We cannot allow that to happen, and must do what we can to ensure an adequate supply of pharmacists in Wyoming, and across the country.

In addition, as Congress prepares to pass a Medicare reform prescription drug bill, seniors will have greater access to medications at a lower cost and will need qualified pharmacists to help them understand and properly use their medications.

The Pharmacy Education Aid Act of 2003 authorizes two new student-loan programs for pharmacists. The first would repay the student loans of pharmacists who agree to practice for at least 2 years in areas with a critical shortage of pharmacists.

The second would repay the loans of students who agree to serve for a least 2 years as faculty members at accredited schools of pharmacy; one of which is at the University of Wyoming.

It makes sense that if we want an adequate supply of pharmacists in the workplace then we need to ensure adequate faculty to guide them through their education.

We are seeing more of a demand for pharmacists in Wyoming, whether it be in our local Walmart and Safeway stores, or in our hospitals.

Our faculty at UW's school of pharmacy is also stretched very thin, and I want to ensure that we continue to have excellent faculty there. After all, they are responsible for providing Wyoming with the best and brightest in the way of pharmacy graduates.

This legislation is designed to encourage students to enter the pharmacy profession, both in individual practice and as university educators. We all know how expensive it is to get an education these days, and pharmacy students can face loans of up to \$90,000.